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STEPHEN THE DARK KING TOWER



BATTLE OF JERICHO HILL

MARVEL
VARIANT
EDITION

1

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BATTLE OF
JERICHO HILL

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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

Despite the best defenses erected in the ancient times by the fabled Arthur Eld, the city of Gilead has fallen. The once rich barony trembled before the forces of the Good Man, John Farson, sworn enemy of the Affiliation once led by the late gunslinger, Steven Deschain.

Following Steven's death, his gunslinger son, young Roland, took control of the city and faced down Farson's army in a losing, final battle.

Several years have passed, and having been routed from Gilead, Roland and his companions, his ka-tet, have been driven into hiding.

That status is about to change...

See this now; see
this very well.

See a city of
ghosts.

Been nigh unto nine years
since the forces of John Fanson,
the Good Man, overwhelmed the
Barony Seat of New Canaan.





Once Gilead, its crown jewel,
bustled and thrived with life.
The gunslingers walked with the
confident swagger that goes
with being masters of their
world.

Funny thing,
though...

...the world don't like
being mastered, and more
often than not...

...tends to take back
what it feels rightly
belongs to 'er.



The buildings of man, scarred with bullets and stained with blood, are as subject to crumbling and overgrowth as are the mountains of Mid-World. Moreso, in fact.

The stench of moss and decay hangs heavy in the air.

The only noise, aside from birds and the skittering of vermin...

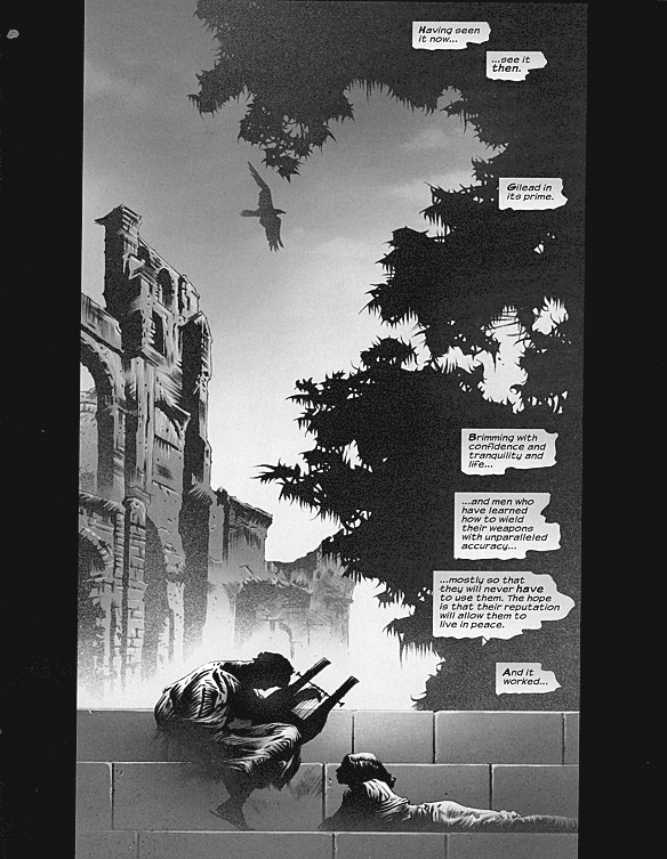


...is the low moaning and snarling of Slow Mutants...

...sustaining themselves on the flesh of occasional vagabonds unfortunate enough to pass through hoping for salvage...



...and washing it down with once-good wine now turned to vinegar.



Having seen
it now...

...see it
then.

Gilead in
its prime.

Brimming with
confidence and
tranquility and
life...

...and men who
have learned
how to wield
their weapons
with unparalleled
accuracy...

...mostly so that
they will never have
to use them. The hope
is that their reputation
will allow them to
live in peace.

And it
worked...

...until it stopped
working.

Until John Farson's invaders
overwhelmed the city, leaving
death and destruction in
their wake.



And Farson looked
upon the handiwork
of his forces...

...and Found
it good.

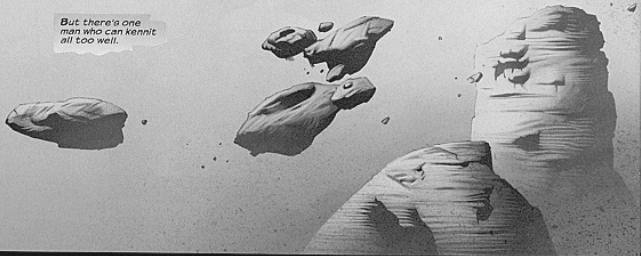


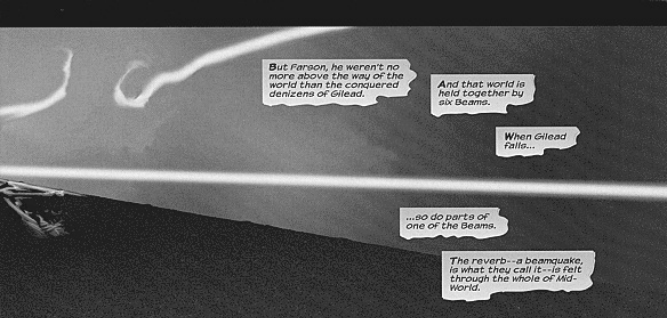


*Most of us, we
cannot ken what
the hell is going
on.*

*Beams, and beamquakes,
and whattaya call 'em,
multiverses...us regular
folk know squat all 'bout
that.*

*But there's one
man who can kennit
all too well.*





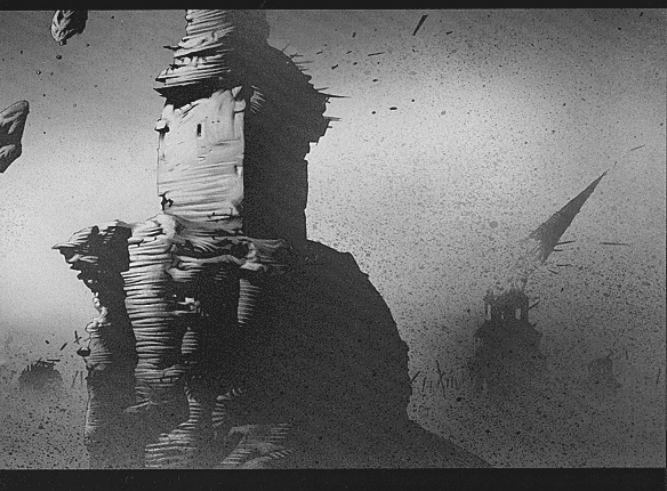
But Farson, he weren't no
more above the way of the
world than the conquered
denizens of Gilead.

And that world is
held together by
six Beams.

When Gilead
falls...

...so do parts of
one of the Beams.

The reverb--a beamquake,
is what they call it--is felt
through the whole of Mid-
World.





His name...one of 'em, anyway... is Warten Broadcloak. Another is Walter O'Dim. Whatever his moniker, he's the good left arm of John Fanson.

Fools! Idiots! Scurrying about like demented ants! Has Fanson no control over his own people?

I see you all down there, panicking over your worthless fates!

Don't you know this is *not* some random happenstance? That it is all part of the Crimson King's *master plan*?



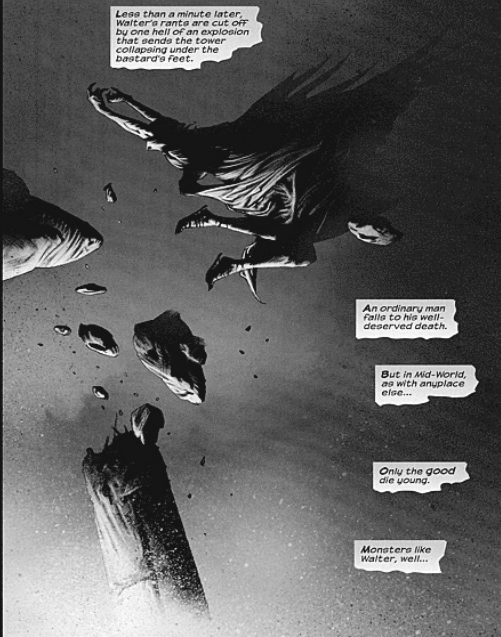
This is not the end of Gilead! It is the *beginning* of the end of *all*!

All hail the Crimson King!

Thing is, ol' Walter might've been best advised to concentrate *less* on his huzzahs for his king...

...and more on his own surroundings. Particularly since the flames of spontaneous fires below have reached the Gilead armory.

GUN
POWDER

A black and white illustration of a man in a long, flowing robe falling through the air. He is positioned upside down, with his arms outstretched. Below him, several large, jagged pieces of stone or debris are falling, suggesting a recent explosion or collapse of a structure. The background is a dark, textured grey.

Less than a minute later,
Walter's rants are cut off
by one hell of an explosion
that sends the tower
collapsing under the
bastard's feet.

An ordinary man
falls to his well-
deserved death.

But in Mid-World,
as with anyplace
else...

Only the good
die young.

Monsters like
Walter, well...

A detailed black and white illustration of a bird's head, likely a crow or raven, shown in profile. The bird has a sharp beak and its feathers are intricately detailed with fine lines. It appears to be looking towards the right.

...they just turn
into birds or
whatnot and fly
off to destroy
more lives.

Several miles away, Roland Deschain, one of the last and greatest of the gunslingers, watches the city what birthed him crumble 'neath its own weight.

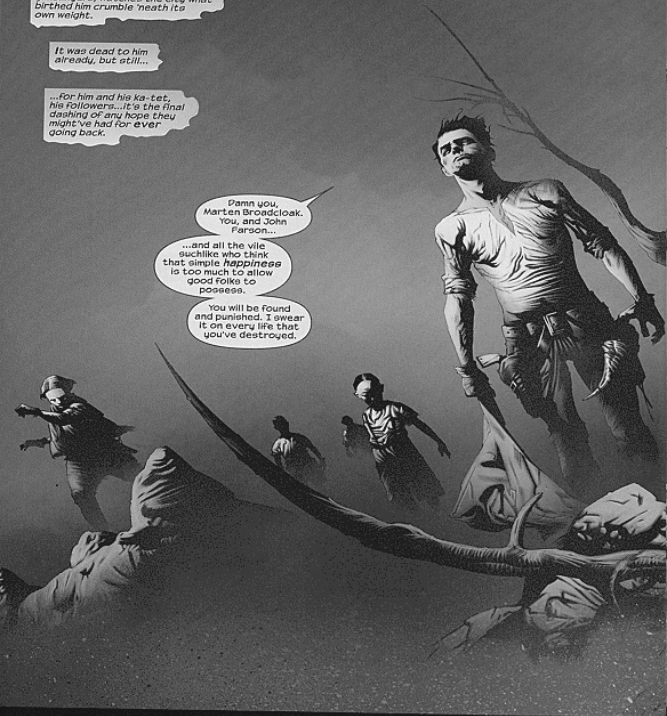
It was dead to him already, but still...

...for him and his ka-tet, his Followers...it's the final dashing of any hope they might've had for ever going back.

Damn you, Marten Broadcloak. You, and John Farson...

...and all the vile suchlike who think that simple happiness is too much to allow good folks to possess.

You will be found and punished. I swear it on every life that you've destroyed.







Roland, hold on to something! The quake--!

Let the ground buck like a mare in heat, Alain!



Let it try and swallow me whole!

It won't still my voice or dampen my resolve one bit!



Marten, Person...they will *all die!* Our guns will spit out the justice they so richly deserve!

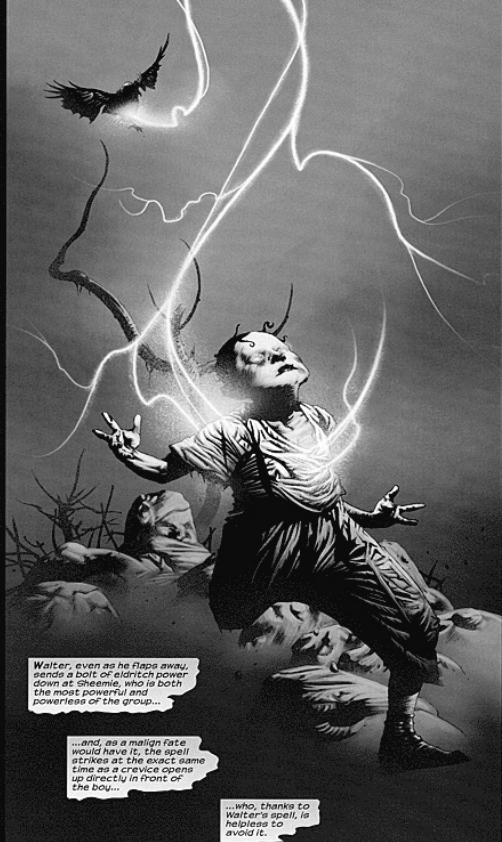
Not before you are spit out, "gunslinger"...

...once the Crimson King devours your guts for a light snack.

Until that meal, though...



...consider this an appetizer.



Walter, even as he flaps away, sends a bolt of eldritch power down at Sheemie, who is both the most powerful and powerless of the group...

...and, as a malign fate would have it, the spell strikes at the exact same time as a crevice opens up directly in front of the boy...

...who, thanks to Walter's spell, is helpless to avoid it.



Good thing that Alain is near enough, and quick enough, t'do somethin' about it.

Sheemie!



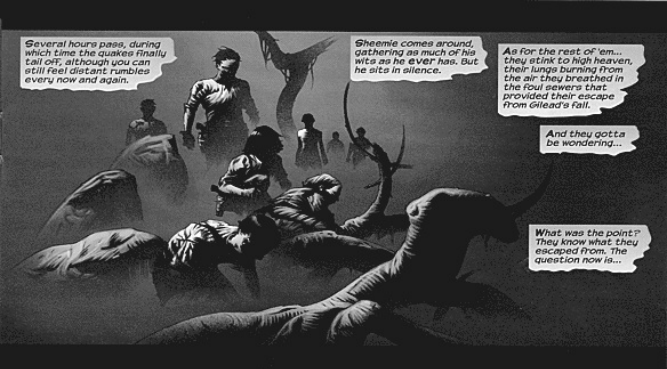
Sheemie, snap out of it!



Roland!
Bert!

Something's
wrong with Sheemie!
He's had some sort
of...of seizure!

Help
him!



Several hours pass, during which time the quakes finally tail off, although you can still feel distant rumbles every now and again.

Sheemie comes around, gathering as much of his wits as he ever has. But he sits in silence.

As for the rest of 'em... they stink to high heaven, their lungs burning from the air they breathed in the foul sewers that provided their escape from Gilead's fall.

And they gotta be wondering...

What was the point? They know what they escaped from. The question now is...



What have we escaped to?

What sort of world are we left with...

...and where in it do we stake our claim?

Seriously, I'm asking, Bert...Alain... Aileen...any of you...

Whither do we go?

Or do we go anywhere? How much can Sheemie move after his seizure...?



Sheemie didn't have no see-zure. Seezed, yes. I seezed a lot.

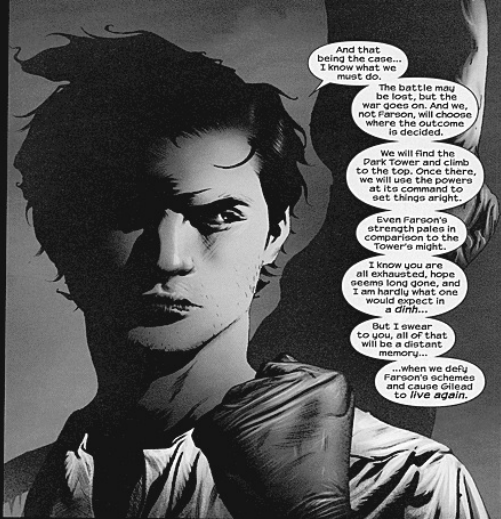
Maybe even seezed too much.

"Saw"? You mean "saw" too much?



A-yuh.

And what did you see, Sheemie?



And that
being the case...
I know what we
must do.

The battle may
be lost, but the
war goes on. And we,
not Fargson, will choose
where the outcome
is decided.

We will find the
Dark Tower and climb
to the top. Once there,
we will use the powers
at its command to
set things aright.

Even Fargson's
strength pales in
comparison to the
Tower's might.

I know you are
all exhausted, hope
seems long gone, and
I am hardly what one
would expect in
a dinh...

But I swear
to you, all of that
will be a distant
memory...

...when we defy
Fargson's schemes
and cause *Gilead*
to live again.

With respect,
Roland, are you
insane? The Tower
is *legend* only!

You see legends
in crevices and my
grandmother saw
futures in tea leaves.
'Tis *no* different.

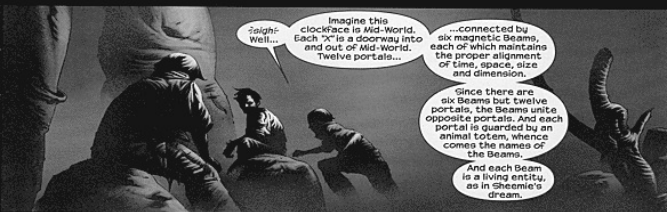
Legends, Randolph, do
not leave visible tracks
such as crevices.

'Tis different
if for no other
reason than that
your grandmother
is dead...

...and I,
your dinh, am
still here.

Honor the
memories of our
teachers and recite
what you know of
the Dark Tower,
Randolph.





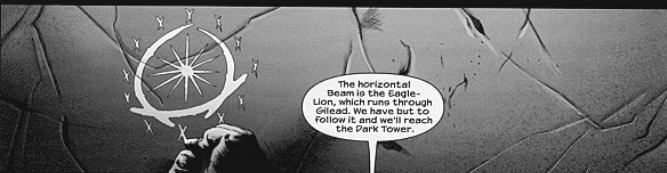
"Maybe
Well..."

Imagine this
clockface is Mid-World.
Each "X" is a doorway into
and out of Mid-World.
Twelve portals...

...connected by
six magnetic Beams,
each of which maintains
the proper alignment
of time, space, size
and dimension.

Since there are
six Beams but twelve
portals, the Beams unite
opposite portals. And each
portal is guarded by an
animal totem, whence
comes the names of
the Beams.

And each Beam
is a living entity,
as in Sheemie's
dream.



The horizontal
Beam is the Eagle-
Lion, which runs through
Gilead. We have but to
follow it and we'll reach
the Dark Tower.



But
Roland...

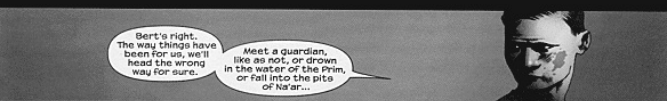
Yes,
Cuthbert?

We don't know
our *whereabouts*
on the Beam. Which
way do we go? East
or West?

We'll have
to take our
chances.



Ah, good plan.
Since, you know,
our luck has been
so *stellar*
thus far.



Bert's right.
The way things have
been for us, we'll
head the wrong
way for sure.

Meet a guardian,
like as not, or drown
in the water of the Prim,
or fall into the pits
of Na'ar...



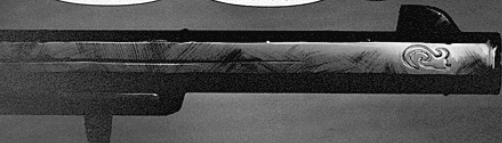
That burning, sulfurous pit that was once our home, Jamie...

That is the pit of Na'ar. And we've already escaped it.

Do you see these guns, my friends? They are the oldest symbol of Mid-World's law. Law that Faeon has spat upon.

Arthur Eld, whose mark they bear, fetched them from the Tower and used them to forge a civilized world for the likes of us.

We can do no less.



Any who are too tired...too saddened...too sullick to join me...then I fully understand. Let this be where we part company, and wish each other luck.

As for any others: Let any who are with me raise their hand.



All of
you?

I dared
not hope, but
expected no
less.

Very well,
then. To the
Park Tower.

And let
nothing stop us
or slow us in our
quest! We leave
immediately!

Can I pee
first?

...
We leave
right after
Sheemie
pees.

TO BE
CONTINUED

THE ROAD TO JERICHO HILL

**Commala-come-come,
Journey's almost done...**

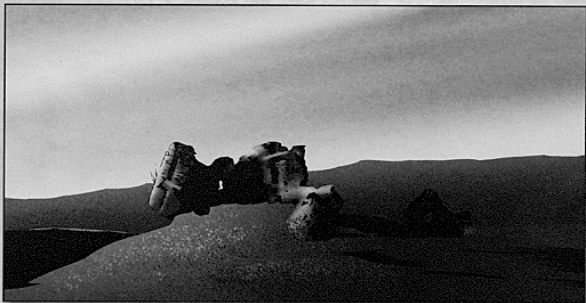
Dear Fellow Constant Readers:

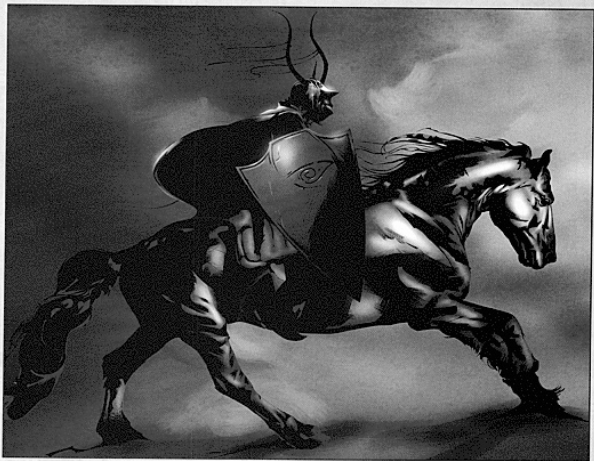
By reading this comic book you have come one step closer to our journey's end. Gilead has fallen, Roland and his friends have aged (alas, as have we all), and the road to Jericho Hill stretches out before us. We have come a long way, say thankya, and the track has been paved with much heartache.

It is hard to believe that more than four years have passed in our

world since Jae Lee and Richard Isanove submitted those initial colored illustrations of Roland pursuing the Man in Black across Mid-World's Mohaine Desert, and since Peter David and I first began adapting Roland's tale. I still remember my surprise and joy at seeing Cort's face (exactly as I had pictured it) as he lunged at Roland during our young dinh's coming of age battle in the Square Yard behind Gilead's Great Hall, and how amazed I was at the beauty of David the hawk's plumage as he swooped at Cort and took out Cort's eye . . .

Such roads we have travelled, we of the tet of the Tower. We have seen poor Susan Delgado burned to ashes, and we have witnessed Eldred Jonas's angry ghost gallop into the clearing at the end of life's path. Alternatively, perhaps those who devote their lives to the cause of the Outer Dark spend the rest of





eternity in End-World, serving in the corrupt court of the Crimson King...

But as we all know, time passes differently in different worlds. In Mid-World, almost a full decade has gone by, and Roland and his friends have grown from boys to young men. They have lost their fathers and their mothers, and their home city has been destroyed. So far, they still have each other. But how long can their tet survive against the Good Man's forces?

Of all our friends, I believe Roland has changed the most. I suppose this isn't surprising, because not only is

he our central protagonist but also because he has undergone the most profound trauma. In the years we have known him, Roland discovered his mother's affair with his father's enchanter, Marten Broadcloak, and found out that she was willing to betray her husband and her city for that love. After winning his guns, Roland left Gilead for the Affiliation stronghold of Hambry, only to discover that Hambry had sold its soul to the Good Man, John Farson. Roland fell in love, but the young woman to whom he gave his heart was accused of treachery by Hambry's traitors and was burned upon a Charyou Tree fire for the crime of being Roland's lover.



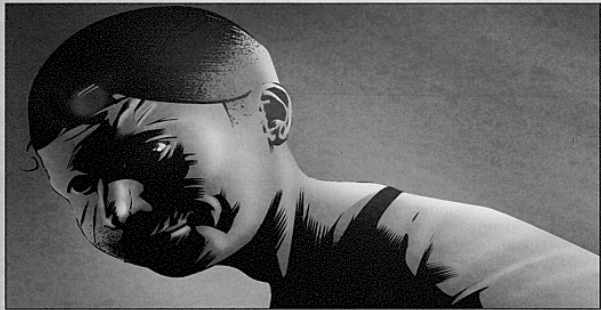
Trapped inside Maerlyn's Grapefruit, Roland battled the Crimson King in End-World, and then escaped only to be tricked by glammer into committing matricide. Still reeling from the crime he had unwillingly (and unwittingly) committed, Roland saw his father and his beloved mentors murdered, and all the men whom he had admired killed, one by one, by the enemies of In-World.

Sometimes I wonder how Roland survived so much horror, and how he managed to stave off bitterness as long as he did. I suppose it was because he had friends—the kind of true, devoted companions that we all dream of having. And in the end, I suppose Roland's companions have also changed. Cuthbert and Alain accompanied Roland to Hambry, and they too had any illusions about the fairness of the world stripped away when they saw how blatantly the men of Mejis could double-cross the gunslingers whom they supposedly served. They also witnessed Susan Delgado's death, and saw their leader's mind drawn into, and then trapped by, Maerlyn's Grapefruit. If it weren't for Cuthbert and Alain's resourcefulness and resilience, Roland would never have made it back to Gilead. And that resourcefulness and resilience was recognized by their elders, who awarded them their guns though they never battled Cort in the Square Yard behind Gilead's Great Hall.

Alas, for Cuthbert and Alain, even celebration ended up being tainted by the tragedy of Roland's life. On the feast night when they were officially awarded their guns, Roland

discovered his mother's treachery and accidentally killed her. Along with Aileen Ritter, Cuthbert and Alain were charged with taking the body of Gabrielle Deschain's accomplice to the morgue, only to discover that the man they had thought dead was not actually dead at all. And they were some of the first to discover Roland's crime, and Gabrielle's bleeding body. Although we spent less time exploring Alain and Cuthbert's grief, they too lost their fathers and mothers in Gilead's fall and saw their homes and their heritage destroyed by that enemy of In-World, John Farson. They too are grist for the mill-wheel we call ka, though their spirits remain unbroken.

Though Cuthbert and Alain are Roland's oldest tet-mates, Roland has had other helpers and supporters along the way. These additional friends have also transformed over the course of our tale, as much because of their exposure to Roland as from the force of ka. Sheemie—that kind-hearted but slow tavern boy from Hambry's Traveller's Rest—followed Roland back to Gilead and along the way had his nascent psychic powers exponentially enhanced. He saved Roland's life, and for that single act, the Crimson King will have his revenge, I am sure of it. And what of Aileen Ritter, Cort's niece who longed to be a gunslinger despite the fact that wielding weapons was off-limits for girls? With Roland's support, she joined our tet and battled against the enemies of her homeland. Although she still loves Roland, she has been willing to settle for being his comrade-at-arms and not his lover . .



. at least for the time being.

Roland changed Aileen's life, but Aileen also changed Roland's. Her unquenchable spirit makes Roland aware of the fact that women can be warriors too. Because of her, Roland has faith in another aspiring female gunslinger, namely Susannah Dean. And though Susannah will not appear in our tale, I hope that long-time Tower fans will see echoes of her fighting spirit in Roland's female companion.

From the beginning of our story, we knew that Roland was an intense and focused boy—a natural warrior and a natural leader. Although less talkative than Cuthbert and less sensitive than Alain, Roland has always had the uncanny ability to bring out his friend's strengths. And it is these strengths that Roland will need as the

Battle of Jericho Hill comes closer. He will need every ounce of collective strength to survive that which is to come.

Long days and pleasant nights, my fellow Tower fans. Though as our tale spins on, those nights grow colder . . .

All the best—

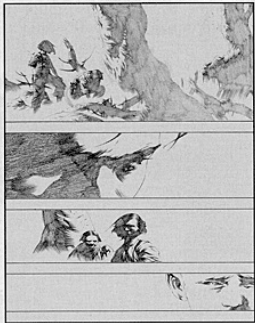
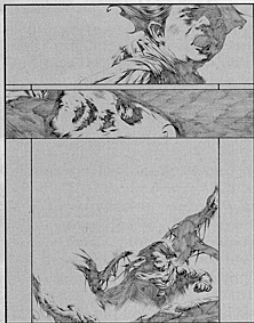
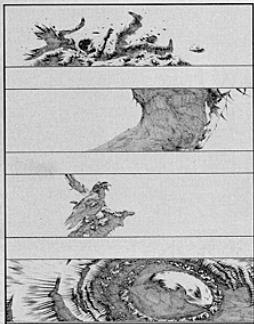
Robin Furth

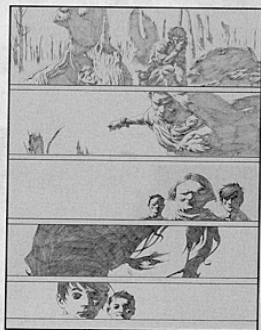
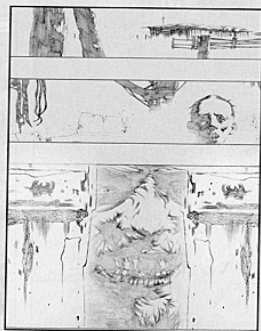
WRITTEN BY:
ROBIN FURTH
ILLUSTRATED BY:
DENNIS CALERO

DARK TOWER:
THE BATTLE OF
JERICHO HILL
ISSUE #1
SKETCHBOOK

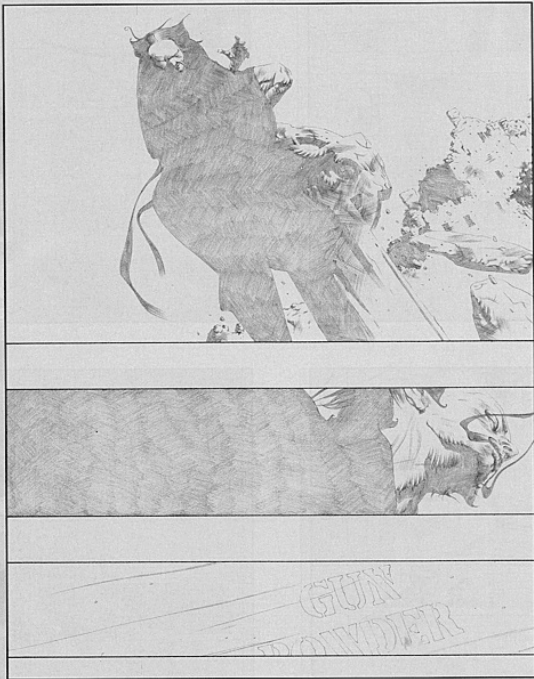
A look at the creative team's in-progress work,
including layouts, pencil art and cover concepts.

JAE LEE'S UNUSED LAYOUTS. THE REVISED VERSIONS OF THESE PAGES WERE
SEEN EARLIER IN THIS ISSUE.

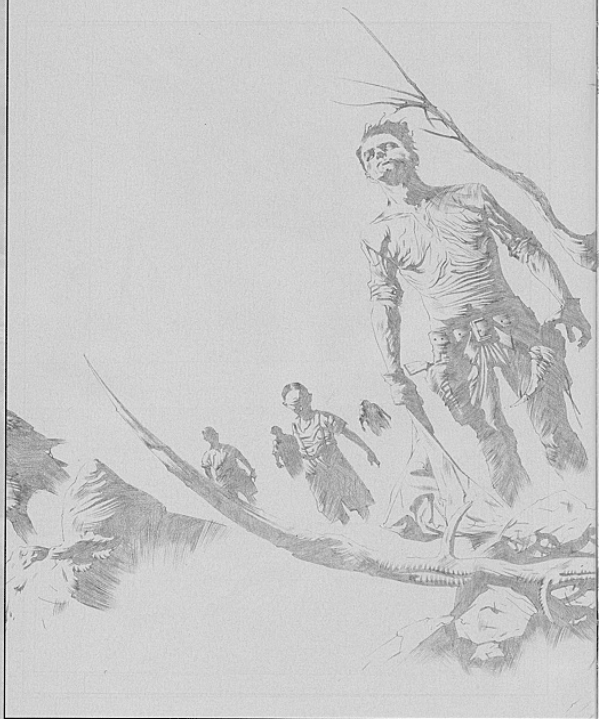




JAE LEE'S FINISHED PENCIL PAGES. THE FINAL VERSIONS WERE PAINTED
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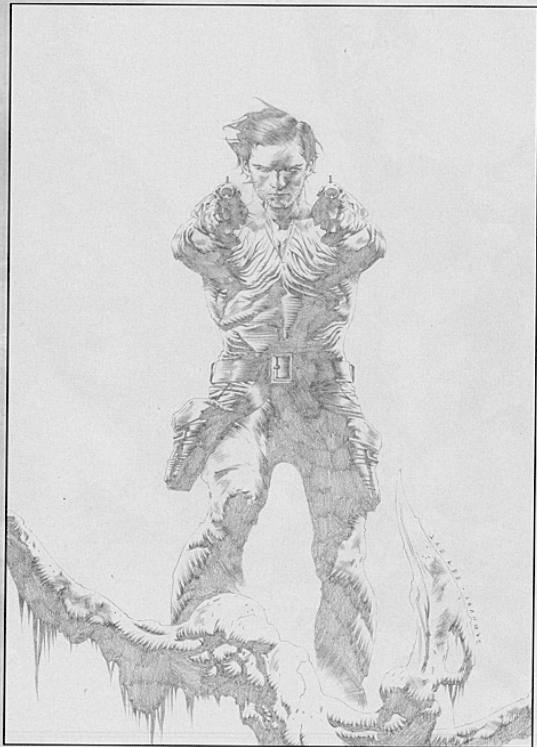








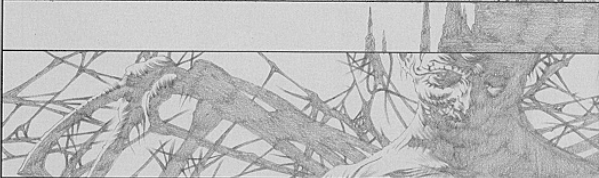
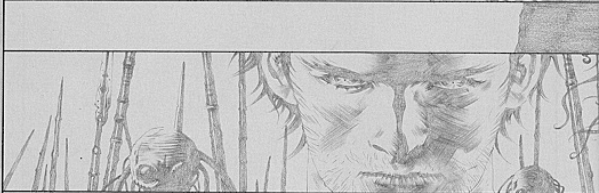
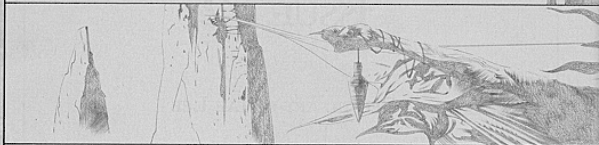
JAE LEE'S COVER PENCILS.

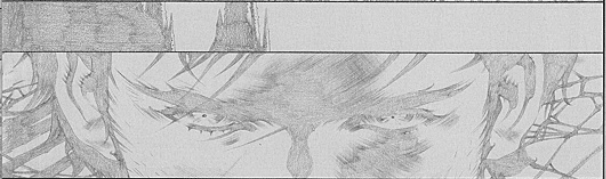


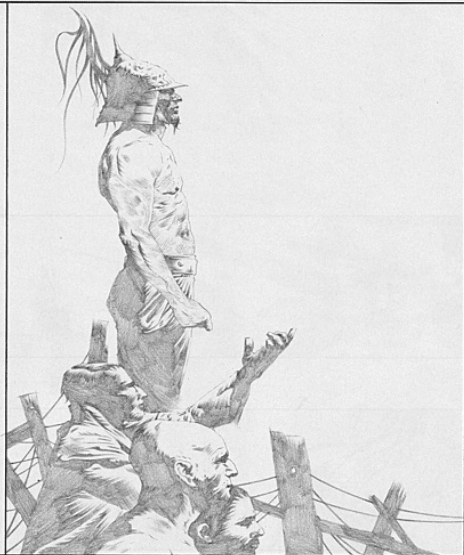
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